

# GRIZZLY

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

A photograph of a soldier in camouflage gear and a helmet standing next to a vehicle. The vehicle has a 'CAL FIRE' patch on it. The soldier is holding a radio or similar device. The background shows a dry, hilly landscape with trees.

## Fire team

Interagency effort stamps out wildfires statewide

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CNG ready to respond to terror attack

**15**



# Leadership Corner

## Ready when disaster strikes

Major General David S. Baldwin



For nearly 400 years, citizen-Soldiers have protected Americans from anyone or anything that threatened our communities. This summer the threat came from wildfires blazing across the West, including the massive Rim Fire endangering Yosemite National Park.

CNG Soldiers and Airmen leapt into action, performing water and fire retardant drops, providing medical evacuation support, establishing satellite communications and, for the first time, using a remotely piloted aircraft to relay real-time video of the Rim Fire and the crews fighting it. We performed all those operations in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, which directed the efforts to contain and combat the blazes.

Just as in our deployments overseas, the CNG's domestic missions often involve outside personnel and agencies that bring different capabilities, equipment and expertise to joint operations. Our list of partners at home continues to grow every year as we establish working relationships with small groups such as Community Emergency Response Teams and with local police, fire and first responder organizations in every part of this state. We also work every year to strengthen our ties with state and federal agencies such as the California Office of Emergency Services, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Nature reminds us every year about the need to prepare for wildfires, and the California Guard has responded to fires in four states so far in 2013. But our role in protecting this state and nation goes much further.

For decades we have assisted in the aftermath of floods, hurricanes and earthquakes throughout the United States. In the 21st century, however, we also must prepare for catastrophic events involving chemical, biological and radiological agents.

Last year our 600-member Homeland Response Force (HRF) earned certification as the key military operations element covering the 36 million residents of FEMA Region IX, which includes Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada and several Pacific islands and U.S. territories. The HRF includes our 9th Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and High-Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) and complements our 9th and 95th Civil Support teams, each of which is dedicated to providing a swift, expert response to any incident involving a weapon of mass destruction or other dangerous contaminant.

In addition to local, state and federal agencies, the Guard works with active duty military forces to assist residents affected by natural or man-made disasters. In situations when Guard and active duty military troops are called into play, a National Guard officer commands all responding military forces under a structure known as dual-status com-



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Dudge

Master Sgt. Nathan Krebs, a medic with the 144th Fighter Wing, assists victims of a simulated earthquake Aug. 27 at Camp Roberts, Calif., during an evaluation of the CNG Homeland Response Force (HRF). The HRF is prepared to respond to any disaster in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IX, which encompasses California, Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada and several Pacific islands. For more on the HRF, see page 15.

mand, making our joint response as efficient as possible.

While the CNG and other agencies are working tirelessly to prepare for any emergency, every Californian also should take steps to minimize the damage of a potential crisis. By planning ahead, each of us can protect ourselves and our families and reduce the strain on our communities when disaster strikes.

September is National Preparedness Month, and this year's theme is "You can be the hero." During an emergency, neighbors and friends are often the first on the scene; by preparing ahead of time, every resident can set themselves up to be a hero and assist those in need.

Every family should have an emergency plan for each type of disaster that affects their area and be prepared with an emergency kit of supplies in their house and car. For help building a plan and a kit, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov). You may also support volunteer organizations that help communities through times of crisis such as the Community Emergency Response Teams, Citizen Corps and Medical Reserve Corps.

Preparedness is our duty in the National Guard — it's built into our motto, "Always Ready, Always There" — but we can only truly be prepared for disaster with the help of agencies across the country and people in every community. Together we can handle anything that comes our way.

**"We can only truly be prepared for disaster with the help of agencies across the country and people in every community. Together we can handle anything that comes our way."**

- Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, The Adjutant General



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## Submissions

### Articles:

- ★ Articles range from 350 to 2,000 words. All articles should be accompanied by multiple high-resolution images.
- ★ Include first names, last names and military ranks. Always verify spelling.
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.
- ★ Only submit articles that have been approved by your unit's public affairs officer.

### Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB.
- ★ No retouched photos, no special effects.
- ★ Include the photographer's name and rank, and a caption: what is happening in the photo, who is pictured and the date and location.

E-mail submissions and feedback to:  
brandon.honig@us.army.mil

## Cover Shot



Photo by  
Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Spc. Matthew Grzywa of the CNG's 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment (Air Assault), and Tim Stepanovich of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection prepare to depart on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Aug. 21 to battle a wildfire in Northern California.

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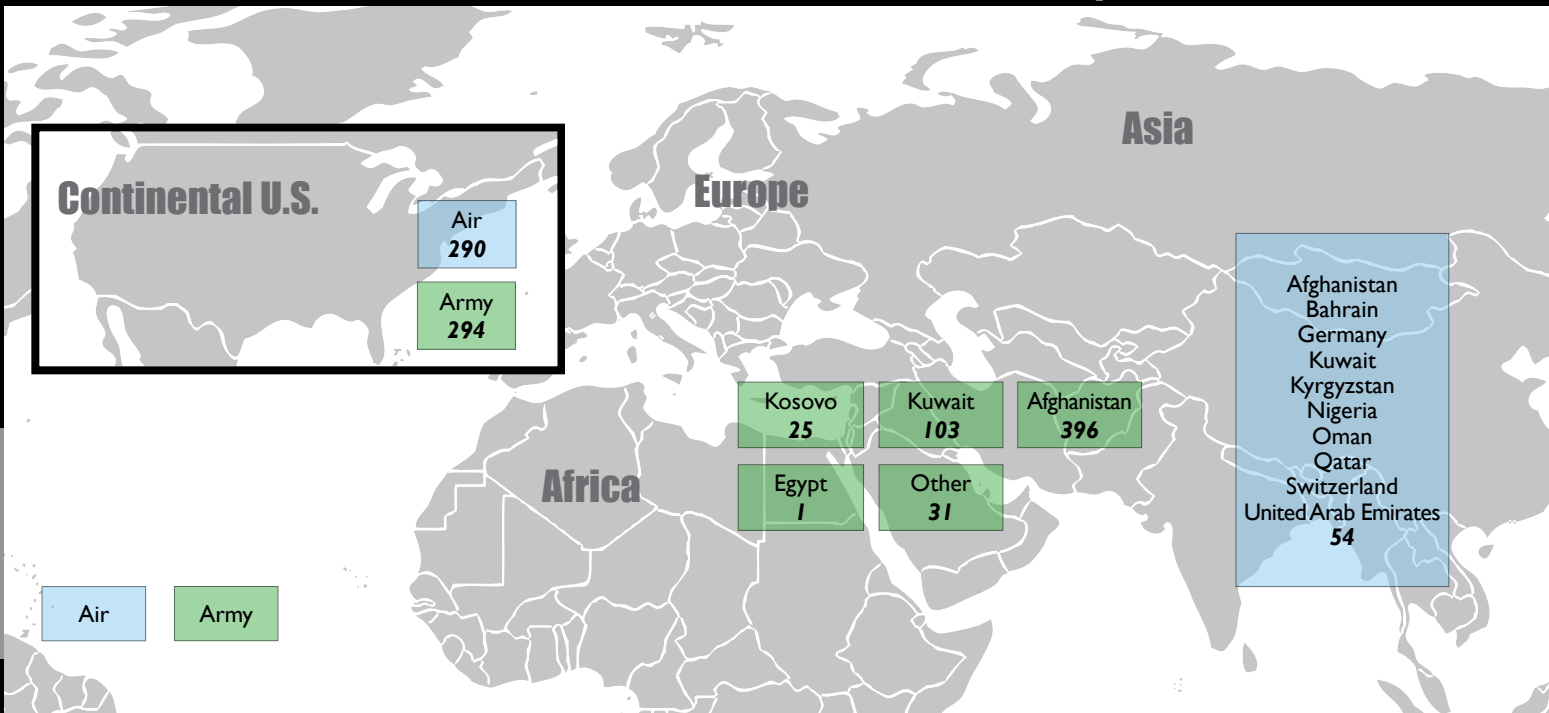
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## California National Guard mobilizations as of September 2013





# I-144th artillery troops head to Afghanistan

Counter-battery unit will locate enemy firing positions for coalition forces during yearlong tour

By **SGT. GLEN BAKER**  
224th Sustainment Brigade

Deploying to a combat zone can be a trying and scary experience, but Soldiers don't need to do it alone — they have the support of each other and the friends and family members seeing them off on their journey overseas.

More than 100 family members, friends and Cal Guard Soldiers attended a deployment ceremony Aug. 4 for troops from Battery F, 1st Battalion, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, at the Guard armory in West Los Angeles. Though numbering only 26, the deploying Fox Battery troops will fulfill as crucial a role in Afghanistan as any line unit: counter-battery radar.

Insurgent forces frequently fire rockets and mortars then quickly relocate. A counter-battery unit locates enemy firing positions so other troops and aircraft can attack before the insurgents have time to move.

"F Battery is unique in that we are responsible for tracking all incoming artillery fire and rockets, and for giving that information to higher headquarters so we can re-engage," said platoon leader Warrant Officer 1 Joseph Villalon. "We're a big part of force protection."

Even the most junior of the deploying Fox

Battery Soldiers feels the sense of urgency in the upcoming deployment.

"My main mission is to bring everybody back home safe — to make sure that all my guys are safe before anything else," said radar operator Pfc. Luis Murillo. "My other mission is target-acquisition and helping everybody find out where these rounds are coming from."

Leaving home for months can be stressful, but weeks of mobilization training and family support has paid off for this force of Soldiers, who are prepared and focused on mission accomplishment.

"Being away from my family is going to be the hardest thing," Murillo said. "As far as the military mission goes, I'm ready for it. I've been training for it."

For the more experienced members of the team, Fox Battery's deployment is a chance to take on new leadership opportunities and take care of the junior troops.

"I've got a lot of new Soldiers; this time I actually get to lead them," said Sgt. 1st Class Robert Randall, a radar section leader with Fox Battery. "During my last three deployments, I was a follower. ... I look forward to taking my experience with F Battery and passing it on to the newer enlisted Soldiers."



Photo by Sgt. Glen Baker



Photo by Staff Sgt. Tina Villalobos

**ABOVE:** Pfc. Luis Murillo, a radar operator with the California Army National Guard's Battery F, 1st Battalion, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, hugs his girlfriend, Pfc. Vivian Arambula of the Army Reserve, during an Aug. 4 deployment ceremony at the battery's readiness center in West Los Angeles. Fox Battery sent 26 Soldiers to Afghanistan for a yearlong counter-battery radar mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. **LEFT:** Fox Battery Soldiers stand in formation during the deployment ceremony.

## CNG's first M777A2 lights up I-143rd's annual training

By **SGT. NEVADA JACK SMITH**  
79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

Firing a 155-mm howitzer is a full-scale assault on the senses. The flash, the earth-shaking boom, the unmistakable smell, the taste of powder, are all brought on by the pull of a lanyard.



For more, scan this QR code or visit Facebook

In August, for the first time, the California Army National Guard enjoyed the tastes and smells of the most versatile and powerful towed artillery piece in the U.S. Armed Forces — an M777A2 howitzer, affectionately nicknamed "Hulk Smash" by the troops of 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery Regiment. The first M777A2 acquired by the Cal Guard was fired Aug. 11 during the 1-143rd's two-week annual training period at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Hulk Smash is the Cal Guard's only M777A2, but 1-143rd Commander Lt. Col. Craig Sandman said the battalion is tentatively slated to gain an additional battery with five more M777A2 howitzers in May. The addition of the weapon means 1-143rd Soldiers will be more effective in their support of the battalion's parent unit, the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).

"This howitzer will bring a capability to the IBCT that we haven't had before," Sandman said. "It's a rapidly deploying weapon capable of being deployed by aircraft or being towed into battle."

The addition of the M777A2 brings increased lethality to the fight as well as speed. Hulk Smash boasts a range of nearly 12 miles with standard high explosive rounds and 17 miles with rocket-assisted projectiles. At a rate of five rounds a minute, the weapon is a testament to field artillery's role as "the king of the battle."

"Artillery historically has always dominated the battle-

field," Sandman said. "We can outmatch our enemy with our artillery because we are precision killers, and with equipment like this we can put the round right on the target. It all boils down to lethality."

Hulk Smash was delivered to the unit ahead of the other five artillery pieces because the 1-143rd already had a platoon trained on the M777A2. In March, the 1-143rd's 2nd Platoon, Battery B, traveled to Fort McCoy, Wisc., to train on the M777A2 in preparation for a tour in Afghanistan. That deployment, however, was canceled.

With a platoon trained and ready to assist their battalion-mates in the 1-143rd, the National Guard Bureau decided to supply an M777A2 several months before the unit is slated to acquire its additional battery.

"We are so far ahead of the curve," Sandman said. "Since I already have a platoon trained, it gives me an opportunity to make my Soldiers proficient faster."

On the battlefield artillery can be used for two main functions — direct support for a maneuver unit or general support for an area of operations. The 1-143rd's howitzers support the IBCT's two maneuver battalions, and Sandman said they could support a third maneuver battalion as well.

"I'm truly impressed with their training efforts, all the way to the squad action level, and am looking forward to the lethality capabilities they will bring to the brigade," said Col. Jeffrey D. Smiley, commander of the 79th IBCT.

Caked in dust and smelling of gunpowder, the Soldiers operating Hulk Smash on Aug. 11 didn't try to hide the grins plastered on their faces.

"Being the first and only M777 [crew] in the state is a privilege," said Staff Sgt. John Rodriguez, a section chief for Battery B. "There is nothing more American than blowing stuff up with your brothers."



Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery Regiment, fire an M777A2 howitzer Aug. 11 at Camp Pendleton, Calif. The howitzer, nicknamed "Hulk Smash" by the unit, is the California Army National Guard's first M777A2.



Photo by Senior Airman John Pharr



Pararescuemen from the CNG's 129th Rescue Wing are hoisted from the Pacific Ocean west of Northern California onto one of the wing's HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters during joint search-and-rescue training with U.S. Coast Guard personnel Aug. 15.

## 129th Rescue Wing, Coast Guard link up for rescue training

By SENIOR AIRMAN JOHN PHARR  
129th Rescue Wing

After jumping from an MC-130P Combat Shadow plane into the Pacific Ocean, sea spray in their faces, pararescue jumpers (PJ) unriggered the Zodiac boat package they had jumped with, made contact with people in distress and stabilized several patients.

The PJs from the 129th Rescue Wing's 131st Rescue Squadron were participating in an Aug. 15 exercise that required them to parachute from the Combat Shadow to rescue simulated patients who had been passengers on a sailboat that capsized off the coast of Santa Cruz. Within seconds of the Airmen and their Zodiac exiting the aircraft, the PJs had secured and inflated the 14-foot boat amid cold ocean swells.

"We get these out-to-sea missions on a fairly regular basis," said Senior Airman Daniel Fisher of the 129th, which is based at Moffett Federal Airfield in Northern California's Silicon Valley. "So it's good that we do this type of training."

In the second part of the exercise, an 87-foot Coast Guard patrol boat, the Hawksbill, experienced a simulated engine fire while responding to the incident involving the capsized sailboat. This led a second team of PJs to parachute into the water to assist.

The second PJ team linked up with the Hawksbill, stabilized three patients and was hoisted off the Coast Guard ship by an Air National Guard HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter. After extracting both of the PJ teams and their patients, the Pave Hawk rendezvoused with the Combat Shadow to refuel in mid-air, then returned to base. Mission successful.

"It was a simulated full medical exercise [with] a lot of moving parts, coordinating with three different boats, a C-130 and a helicopter," said Senior Airman Dustin Davies. "Everything went very smoothly."

The joint exercise integrated California Air National Guard, Moffett Federal Airfield and Coast Guard District 11 assets. Joint exercises help members of different services work together, allowing them to become familiar with each other.

"It was great working with the Coast Guard, coming up on their frequencies, familiarizing with their crews," said Senior Airman Adam Vanhaaster. "We don't always get to do that."

## Troop 'catches' kids by surprise

CNG Soldier's unsuspecting son throws ceremonial first pitch to recently returned father in catcher's mask

By LT. COL. (CA) RICK LALOR  
CNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion

Sgt. 1st Class James Hereth's homecoming from Afghanistan took place in a minor league baseball park in Sacramento, but it was a major league performance by the Soldier and father of two.

Hereth, a baseball fan who regularly attends Sacramento River Cats games, had viewed footage of Soldiers' homecomings at ballparks on the Internet while deployed to Afghanistan and was intrigued by the possibility of surprising his two kids, 10-year-old Devin and 13-year-old Summer. He contacted the River Cats, who were happy to oblige.

It all came together at Raley Field in West Sacramento on July 23. Hereth donned the team's uniform and catcher's gear and crouched down behind home plate to receive a ceremonial first pitch from his unsuspecting son and daughter, who had been selected to honor their father's service. Devin and Summer expected their father would be home from deployment in a few days.

Devin pitched, then Sgt. 1st Class Hereth caught the ball and removed his mask, followed by his son and daughter rushing into his arms as the emotional crowd stood and cheered.



Photo by Sacramento River Cats

Sgt. 1st Class James Hereth reveals himself to his 13-year-old daughter, Summer, and 10-year-old son, Devin, after Devin threw out the ceremonial first pitch before a July 23 minor league game in Sacramento. Summer and Devin expected their father to return from a yearlong tour in Afghanistan later that month and were shocked to see the man behind the mask.

"I didn't know if I was dreaming," said a stunned Devin.

"I'm forever grateful for this, and we'll always remember it," Sgt. 1st Class Hereth said.

And they're not the only ones.

"It was a great opportunity for us to honor a Soldier who has served his country, a father and a family who has sacrificed," said River Cats marketing manager Leslie Lindsey. "Our team, coaching staff, fans and front office all felt great about being a part of this special moment. ... We are fortunate to share America's pastime with hundreds of thousands of fans each year, and without men and women like Sergeant First Class Hereth, we would not have the opportunity to do so."

## School project takes 163rd to Latvia

Civil engineers install 84 new windows in Latvian high school

By TECH SGT. JOE PROUSE  
163rd Reconnaissance Wing

Forty members of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Civil Engineering Squadron (CES) deployed to Latvia in August to refurbish a high school in the town of Aluksne about 13 miles from the Russian border.

The wing members worked alongside Latvian Army engineers to demolish existing fixtures and install 84 new windows before handing off the job to a North Dakota Air National Guard unit to install 43 additional windows. The Airmen worked under the supervision of a civilian Latvian contractor to learn the local standards required to retrofit the four-story building, which is nearly a century old.

"Having only one task of replacing

windows can make the job tedious, but [the CES] always comes to work hard," said Maj. Heidi Gibson, field commander for the group that deployed. "Projects seem to come together, and before you know it, the two weeks are up and you can stand back, see your efforts and enjoy the sense of accomplishment."

The Airmen's work will provide the Latvian students with thicker glass and double panes, putting a buffer between them and the region's harsh winters. Students also now have the ability to open the windows and let in fresh air.

"Looking at your faces and your smiles, we believe this joint effort will succeed and we will be able to start the school year in a newly renovated building," Principal Diana Dubre told the workers.

Despite some Airmen being on their first deployment, coordinating efforts with the Latvian Army proved to be a seamless process.

"Part of the success came from sharing quarters and mixing the teams," Senior Master Sgt. Andre Kreil of the 163rd said. "Instead of having American and Latvian teams, they just molded into one, giving all of us a chance to get to know these people on and off the job."

Working alongside the Latvian Soldiers was no different from any assignment back home, Senior Airman Jarrett Smith said.

"We teamed up with a great bunch of Latvian Army engineers," he said. "Once you get over the language hurdles, it becomes like any job site where everyone is working to get the best finished product."

Work on the historic school building was important to the local populace. The structure is named after Ernst Glück, a prominent figure in Latvian history who translated the Bible into Latvian.

"The town members conveyed a sense of pride for the building because it was built during a time of non-occupation, making it a truly Latvian construction — now with a little help from us," Gibson said.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Joe Prouse



Airmen from the CNG's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Civil Engineering Squadron install new windows in a school in Latvia on Aug. 8.





# Guardsmen aim to be the best

131 Soldiers, Airmen compete for 10 spots on Team California

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**

California Military Department Public Affairs

Every Guardsman, regardless of occupational specialty, should be a proficient marksman, for any one of them could be called on to pick up a rifle in defense of the nation. But who are the best shooters in California?

For service members who think they have what it takes to live by the maxim "one shot, one kill," it is only appropriate they have exactly one chance each year to earn one of the slots on Team California, the shooting team that will represent the entire CNG in competitions around the country — not just against other Guard teams, but troops from every component of the Army.

How does one earn one of these much-coveted positions? By attending the California Combat Match, a shooting event that is as unique as it is challenging. A total of 131 Soldiers and Airmen answered the call this year, gathering at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif., for the Aug. 21-25 event. Of those, the 10 highest-scoring individuals were chosen to represent California in 2014.

Team California is broken into two squads of four shooters. Squad A is composed of the two best "old" shooters — team members from a previous year — and the two

best new shooters. Squad B also comprises two old and two new members. The two remaining team members are alternates, ready to take a place on either squad. This gives new Guardsmen an opportunity to participate on the team every year, while still retaining the accumulated knowledge and experience of the old shooters.

The word of the day at the Combat Match was diversity, as Team California is scheduled to participate in a wide variety of marksmanship competitions in 2014. For this reason the competition was not just a shooting match; it was a series of exercises that tested the participants' combat readiness in virtually every way possible.

The El Presidente event, for example, is a timed course requiring a shooter to put the correct number of shots into multiple targets in the correct sequence. The Tyr Run event requires competitors to run in full gear more than a mile uphill.

Of all the units at the match, 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, earned the distinction of the best shooting unit, followed by 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment. Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, the CNG marksmanship coordinator and commander of the 1-184th, scored 1st in the individual competition.

The 1-184th's Sgt. 1st Class Geoffrey Applegate has scored among the top shooters at the match year after year, and this February he won the national, Army-wide Small Arms Competition. Applegate again made his mark at the Combat Match this year, taking 1st in the Devil's Playground event, which requires movement through a variety of positions while engaging near and distant targets and shooting on the move.

No Combat Match competitor is judged by appearance or words, only by actions, as evidenced by Staff Sgt. Alfred Moreno, a 2013 team member who won 3rd place, keeping his position for another year.

"He is no doubt the greatest runner on Team California," Garcia said of the solidly built Moreno. "At first glance one would never choose Moreno as the fastest man, but make no mistake, he is a powerhouse."

Millikan said it is important for the team to regularly introduce new shooters such as a Pvt. Carl Quiocson of the 1-184th, who scored 7th place.

"Quiocson is a newcomer to the Army, and his raw talent shined throughout the match," Millikan said. "With a little coaching, he is certain to be one of the best shooters in the entire U.S. Army."



Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Riley

**TOP:** Guard members compete in the California Combat Match marksmanship competition Aug. 24 at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. **ABOVE:** A Soldier drags a dummy to his next firing position during the Devil's Playground event as part of the five-day Combat Match.

## Knowledge of multiple weapons key to marksmanship success

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**

California Military Department Public Affairs

Some of the very best marksmen in the state met at a dusty private shooting range Sept. 11 with one purpose in mind: to spend the entire day firing pistol drills, honing their skills in preparation for the grueling National Guard and Army shooting competitions in the months to come.

The shooters, members of the California National Guard's Team California, met at the range in Sacramento to practice with the 9 mm M9 service pistol. Team California does not carry out a drill just once, but over and over again, each time becoming slightly better and more able to perform under even the most difficult circumstances. The main course of fire for the day was the Pistol Excellence in Competition event.

Team California shoots paper for score, but their underlying purpose is of the utmost importance: to attain the highest level of proficiency possible with a weapon used



Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

**Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, the CNG marksmanship coordinator, fires a round with an M9 pistol during a Sept. 11 practice with Team California at a private range in Sacramento.**

by thousands of service members in combat operations.

"Pistol marksmanship is a fundamental of being a Sol-

dier," said Lt. Col. Louis Millikan, the state marksmanship coordinator. "It's the basic secondary weapon; for many Soldiers it's even their primary weapon."

Even for a service member using an M-16 rifle as his or her primary weapon, the need to know how to use the pistol effectively remains.

"What are you going to do if your rifle goes down?" said Sgt. 1st Class Geoffrey Applegate, a Team California member.

The principle of adaptability in combat extends not just to the pistol, but every other type of small arm commonly seen in combat zones overseas. Knowledge is power, and the ability to effectively use multiple firearms increases the service member's ability to accomplish the mission.

"Pretty much everybody in the Middle East uses the AK-47 except us," Applegate said. "If you need to pick up an AK-47, you have to know how to use it."



# Sherpa: Cheap, versatile, at-risk

Future of the Army's cargo plane in doubt

By **1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY**  
California Military Department Public Affairs

The C-23 Sherpa doesn't have the sleek, powerful look you might expect in a military aircraft; the boxy, squat cargo plane looks like a throwback to the early days of flight. With its twin-propeller, twin-tail design, the Sherpa may appear ungainly, but it fills an important niche in Army aviation.

"It's a multi-role airplane that's versatile and cheap to operate and maintain," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Doug Jones, commander of Fresno-based Detachment 1, Company I, 185th Theater Aviation Brigade.

Detachment 1 is the CNG's Sherpa unit, part of the 1106th Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group (TASMG). Its Sherpa is one of the last still flying for the National Guard. Forty-three Sherpas nationwide were flying for the Army Guard last year; however, all but a handful have since been placed in indefinite storage.

Sherpas originally were used by the U.S. Air Force in Europe. They were turned over to the Guard in 1990. In California, the plane has supported wildfire operations, transported VIPs, enabled parachute jump training and shuttled personnel, cargo and aircraft parts up and down the state.

"One of the main things we used them for was flying parts for the [TASMG]," California Guard State Aviation Officer Col. Lou Carmona said. "Then they started flying them in theater in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they really filled a niche, allowing us to fly parts cheaply from airport to airport."

The plane's versatility and ability to take on missions on a dime has made it a favorite of San Diego-based Navy SEAL Team 7. Earlier this year, SEAL Team 7 Operations Master Chief Petty Officer Hugh Higgs wrote a letter of appreciation to Jones, thanking Detachment 1 for flying 81 jumpers on seven



Photos by Detachment 1, Company I, 185th Theater Aviation Brigade

## C-23 Sherpa by the numbers

**7,000-pound capacity**

**770-mile range**

**23-passenger seating**

**218 MPH**



high-altitude, high-opening night jumps.

"The ability for the Sherpa squadron to understand, incorporate and immediately action on the standard operating procedures of the SEAL platoon during tactical operations is a critical skill set essential to mission success," Higgs wrote.

Though Detachment 1 was assigned two Sherpas in the early 1990s, it now has one Sherpa, four pilots and five flight engineers. The detachment's Sherpas were both deployed to Iraq in 2003-4, but due to operational needs, only one returned to Fresno while the other remained in theater. The detachment deployed back to Iraq in 2006-7 and again in 2008-9, then deployed to Egypt for seven months in 2011-12.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, the Sherpa has

played an important role, shuttling everything from aircraft parts to blood, ammunition and personnel. The Sherpa can carry up to 23 passengers or 7,000 pounds of cargo. It flies at about 218 miles per hour and has a range of about 770 miles.

Although it is far smaller than the Air Force's C-130 cargo planes and has less capacity than the Army's CH-47 Chinook helicopter, the Sherpa is less expensive to fly and maintain than either aircraft.

"It burns far less fuel than a Chinook and it's a very simple aircraft with fewer moving parts," Jones said.

The hourly cost to operate a Sherpa is nearly 75 percent lower than to operate a Chinook, according to the Defense Department Reimbursable Rates Chart. As compared with a C-130, the cost is about 50 to 70 percent less, depending on the C-130 model.

In addition to Army troops, Air Force and Air Guard personnel are frequent fliers on the Sherpa because of Detachment 1's ability to get them to their destination quickly and on a short timeline, Jones said.

"We're not as tied up by regulations as the Air Force," he said. "We're more flexible in the way that we operate."

Chinook and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews also use the Sherpa to get to their aircraft during wildfire season.

"We used the C-23 on a consistent, weekly basis this fire season to rotate helicopter crews," said Maj. Ben Garcia, operations officer for the Mather Army Aviation Support

**ABOVE:** A C-23 Sherpa from the California Army National Guard's Detachment 1, Company I, 185th Theater Aviation Brigade, flies over San Diego. The cargo plane, which has served the Guard since 1990 and is considered a versatile, cheaper alternative to helicopter transportation, is scheduled to be placed in storage indefinitely this month. **LEFT:** California Guardsmen conduct a preflight inspection of a Sherpa on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt in 2011. **BELOW LEFT:** The Soldiers of Detachment 1 pose with their Sherpa at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, in 2009. The detachment deployed to Iraq three times during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Facility (AASF). "It allowed us to get crews here in a timely manner without using helicopter blade time. That way we are able to save [flight] hours for missions and save time on scheduled maintenance."

While those familiar with the Sherpa often sing its praises, the future of the aircraft is uncertain. Detachment 1 is scheduled to fly its Sherpa to Fort Sill, Okla., this month to be placed in storage, possibly indefinitely. The Army has decided to phase out the Sherpa as a cost-cutting measure. A retirement ceremony will be held for the aircraft Sept. 27 at Mather AASF near Sacramento.

"It's older and not as sexy, so it's kind of gone by the wayside," California National Guard Federal Policy and Liaison Chief Andreas Mueller said of the Sherpa.

This year's National Defense Authorization Act has funding for the Guard's Sherpa program and it disallows its retirement, Mueller said. But the Army has other ideas.

"The problem is the Army is planning to put them in storage and place them in indefinite repair," he said. "The Army wants to get out of the fixed-wing aircraft business, but we should not be retiring them. We use them, they're cheap, there's no reason we should let go of them."

Jones said he is hopeful the Defense Authorization Act will be signed before the year is out and the Detachment's Sherpa will be back in business, at least for another year.

"It's a sad day if we're not able to save that aircraft," Carmona said. "It's a great competency we'll longer have."







# CNG firefighters fly into action to protect Golden State

Photo by Staff Sgt. Ed Drew

## Wide variety of CNG personnel, aircraft contribute to historic firefighting mission

By **MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY**  
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

With blazes burning in Yosemite National Park and many other parts of the West this summer, Soldiers and Airmen from several California National Guard units staged their gear and mobilized to defend their communities. Called upon at a moment's notice to protect lives, homes, businesses and municipal water sources, the service members battled the blazes with strength, courage and skill.



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The Guard response included pilots, crews and maintainers for the CNG's firefighting helicopters and planes as well as its MQ-1 remotely piloted aircraft (RPA). CNG personnel also provided satellite communications for the firefighting effort. The CNG's use of the MQ-1 marked the first time an RPA has been utilized in a Guard firefighting operation.

"It feels great to be helping in our state," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Bednar of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment (Air Assault), out of Los Alamitos, Calif. "A majority of our flying is usually training-based, so actually going out and doing what we trained for is a great feeling."

So far this year, California Army and Air Guard members have fought the American, Camarillo Springs, Deer,



Photo by 163rd Reconnaissance Wing

**TOP:** An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter crew from the 129th Rescue Wing drops water on the Rim Fire near Yosemite National Park on Aug. 26. **ABOVE:** An MQ-1 remotely piloted aircraft takes off Aug. 28 from Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, Calif., and heads for the Rim Fire.

Hough, Gobbler, Mountain, Rim and Swedes fires in California. In addition the California Air Guard's 146th Airlift Wing has fought fires in Arizona and Colorado. The Rim Fire, which burned parts of Yosemite, was 84 percent con-

tained as of Sept. 17 but had already burned 255,000 acres, making it the third-largest in California history.

"[Fire missions involve] long hours, long days, but huge fulfillment on a mission well-done," Bednar said. "I have yet to go home from a fire without the feeling I actually did some good for the state of California."

CNG forces supported firefighting missions directed by the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). The agencies train together annually to ensure an efficient, rapid response to the wildfires that threaten California each summer.

"The California National Guard was a huge part of the team," said Cal Fire Capt. Anna Anderson. "We are pleased with the crews and their dedication."

California Army and Air Guard helicopter crews carrying 660-gallon or 2,000-gallon water buckets have logged more than 560 firefighting flight hours this year, conducting 2,021 water bucket drops totaling more than 1 million gallons of water.

California Air Guard planes carrying 3,000-gallon Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems II (MAFFS) added another 176 flight hours and 462,500 gallons to the fight in California, and also dropped about 70,000 gallons in

## Fox Company maintainers keep birds flying

Photo by SPC. Nadine White



**Sgt. David Calderon performs maintenance on a UH-60 Black Hawk at Mather Airfield near Sacramento on Sept. 6.**

By **SPC. NADINE WHITE**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

As of the dark, early morning hours of Sept. 6, the Rim Fire in and around Yosemite National Park had burned 246,000 acres, making it the third-largest wildfire in California history. At the fire's most ferocious point, more than 15 helicopters from the California National Guard were participating in the joint effort to extinguish the blaze and other fires across the state, making water drops, providing transportation for firefighters and standing by for medical evacuation support.

Flying in less than optimal conditions through thick smoke and close to flames taller than the area's famous sequoias,

the CNG successfully assisted in surpassing 80 percent containment of what once seemed to be an unconquerable wildfire.

To ensure air crews' safety and successful flight operations, it was crucial to keep the Guard's UH-60 Black Hawks, HH-60 Pave Hawks and CH-47 Chinooks in the best working conditions possible and make them continuously available for use. That was the job of the maintenance crew from Company F, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB), which worked countless hours at Mather Army Aviation Support Facility near Sacramento to guarantee each aircraft was mission-ready.

"With such a high-priority natural disaster, our main-



Arizona and Colorado. In addition, two MAFFS-equipped planes from the North Carolina National Guard assisted in fighting the Rim Fire. The Forest Service-owned MAFFS disperse water or fire retardant through a nozzle on the side of the plane, potentially covering an area one-quarter of a mile long by 100 feet wide.

"Our job is to support the firemen on the ground," Bednar said. "We don't necessarily attack the main part of the fires; instead we find little spots and fingers that spread the fire and put them out."

Cal Guard helicopter crews also supported firefighting operations by shuttling more than 2,600 Cal Fire hand crew members to and from the fires in groups of 25, as well as transporting supplies such as gasoline, chainsaws and heavy equipment.

"Each time we hauled a group of firefighters, I knew I was doing my part toward containing the fire," said Sgt. 1st Class Edward Moe, a CH-47 Chinook crew chief for 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment.

Bednar said crew chiefs like Moe typically don't get enough credit for their hard work and expertise.

"The pilots may be the ones who fly the aircraft, but the crew chiefs are the ones who control it with their directions and movements," he said. "We rely on them heavily to safely maneuver us in the water to pick up a full bucket and then guide us onto the fire."

Bednar added that helicopter crews build a sense of camaraderie while fighting fires that "parallels combat."

"It's not exactly the same, but you have to rely on every part of the crew like you would in a deployment situation," he said.

Every crew is also mindful of the fact that they can't do their job without the hard work and dedication of CNG maintenance staff.

"Maintenance was an all-day, every-day event," said Sgt. Morgan Fay of 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, based in Stockton. "At

one time, we were supporting five UH-60s and one HH-60. Some of the maintenance took us late into the night.

"I take pride in knowing I was part of an outstanding team that contributed to the mission success of dropping the payload on time and on target," he added.

The California Air Guard's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing also joined the fire fight for the first time in history after obtaining approval from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel to deploy an MQ-1 remotely piloted aircraft. The MQ-1 gathered real-time video on the fires and the positions of hand crews, enabling incident commanders to more effectively allocate their resources and ensure safe lines of retreat for hand crews.

"In the first 30 to 45 minutes [of MQ-1 video], I saw more of the fire than I had in four days of hiking it," said Capt. Jeremy Salizzoni, a fire behavioral analyst for Cal Fire. "We were able to isolate, identify and act upon spot fires that would have become extensions of the fire, in minutes, not hours."

"I don't think we've even scratched the surface of [the MQ-1's] capabilities for public safety," he added.

Airman 1st Class Kristopher Speir, a crew chief for the 163rd, said it was an honor to be a part of a mission that had not been flown by the National Guard before.

"Just knowing that what we do every day does actually help in many different ways was enough fuel for myself and my wingman to work the long shifts to complete our mission requirements," he said. "I am glad that all of the training and prepping I have done has actually paid off in the world for someone other than myself."

It was a pervasive sentiment among the service members on the job.

"People's perceptions about the National Guard are that we are here to help them in times of dire need," Bednar said. "These situations allow us to live up to those expectations, and we are proud to do so."

tenance operations and number of mechanics on site increased significantly," said Staff Sgt. Angela Brennan from Fox Company, 2-135th GSAB. "We work in 12-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

The increase in workload required Fox Company to recruit mechanics from other CNG units to assist their normal full-time staff, resulting in more than 40 aviation mechanics working at any given time.

"Daily maintenance checks are required after each individual flight, no matter what," said Sgt. Kurt Krause, a full-time aviation mechanic and crew chief for Fox Company. "Then 40-hour inspections are required after the aircraft has flown 40 hours, and a 120-hour inspection is due after 120 hours of flight."

From Aug. 16, when the Guard joined the Rim Fire fight, through Sept. 6th, Fox Company performed 328 daily

maintenance checks, ten 40-hour inspections and two 120-hour inspections. There were also numerous unscheduled repairs.

"Aircraft would return with landing gear damage, transmission damage, engine leaks, GPS issues, altimeter issues and countless troubleshooting issues," Brennan said.

Although the California National Guard helicopters' firefighting efforts had stopped by Sept. 3, two Black Hawks remained on rotating, weekly duty in Fresno to provide medical evacuation support for other firefighting agencies. CNG medevac units bring capabilities to an operation that other firefighting agencies do not have.

"Our night vision goggles are a huge asset no one else has in the air," said Sgt. David Calderon, an aviation mechanic and crew chief for Fox Company. "If a firefighter goes down at night and needs to be medically evacuated, we

can go where no one else can. As long as our medics are in the fight, we're in the fight."

Calderon normally works as a mechanic for Fox Company, but during the fires he also served as a crew chief.

"During the fire season, it gets pretty crazy," he said. "I'd be gone for eight days flying on the fire, and then I'd come back and work 12-hour days maintaining the aircraft."

Although the Rim Fire had been contained to a controllable size and a majority of the CNG's aircraft had returned to their home stations by Sept. 6, the work of an aviation mechanic in Fox Company is never complete.

"We'll continue working on these helicopters for a good while," Krause said. "There is always something that will need to be repaired or replaced to keep them running in good condition."



Photo by Senior Airman Nicholas Carzis



Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey



Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey



Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

**TOP LEFT:** A C-130J from the 146th Airlift Wing drops fire retardant on the Mountain Fire west of Palm Springs on July 19. **TOP RIGHT:** Sgt. Chris Boni, a crew chief for 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, releases water on the Rim Fire from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Aug. 22. **ABOVE:** A 1-140th Soldier prepares a 660-gallon water bucket Aug. 23. **CENTER LEFT:** Sgt. Stephan Brown monitors communications with CNG aircraft flying over California wildfires Aug. 20 in the Incident Commander's Command, Control and Communications Unit, or IC4U, at California National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Sacramento.





**ABOVE:** Spc. Cameron Sumaya of the 1106th Theatre Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group runs through the Obstacle Course event of the California Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition on Sept. 11 at Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif. The grueling four-day competition pitted 15 Soldiers from around the state against each other in a variety of events. **Photo by 223rd Regional Training Institute** For more on the **Best Warrior Competition**, see the upcoming **October** issue. **TOP RIGHT:** A shooter in the California Combat Match marksmanship competition takes aim Aug. 24 on Camp San Luis Obispo. More than 130 California National Guard Soldiers and Airmen competed in the five-day event, seeking one of 10 spots on the Team California marksmanship squad. **Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Bruce Riley** For more on the **Combat Match**, see page 6. **CENTER:** Col. Vito Imbasciani, the California National Guard state surgeon, center, receives a resolution from the California State Assembly during the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride ceremony June 24 at the Capitol in Sacramento. The resolution recognizes Imbasciani as an outstanding LGBT leader. He is joined on the Assembly floor by Assemblyman Mike Gatto, far right, Speaker of the Assembly John A. Perez and Assemblymen Rocky Chavez and Ira Ruskin. **RIGHT:** CNG Soldiers and Airmen line the Petco Park field before the baseball game between the San Diego Padres and Colorado Rockies on Sept. 8, which the Padres designated California National Guard Appreciation Day. Dozens of Guard members participated in the pre-game ceremony, which included the CNG's 40th Infantry Division Band playing the national anthem and the CNG's Sgt. 1st Class Mark Romo throwing out the ceremonial first pitch. **Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey**





# At a Glance



LEFT: A Soldier with 1st Battalion, 143rd Field Artillery Regiment, digs a hole to emplace the unit's new M777A2 howitzer, the first in the California Guard, during an Aug. 11 training exercise at Camp Pendleton, Calif. **Photo by Sgt. Nevada Jack Smith** For more on the 1-143rd, see page 4. TOP: Sgt. Chris Boni of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment (Air Assault), based out of Los Alamitos, Calif. looks out over the Rim Fire near Yosemite National Park while performing water bucket drops from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter Aug. 22. **Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey** ABOVE: First Lieutenant Robert Orozco of the CNG State Honor Guard salutes a memorial to Soldiers who gave their lives fighting in the Korean War on Aug. 30 during the final reunion of the 40th Infantry Division Korean War Veterans Association at the division's headquarters on Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos. **Photo by Sgt. Matthew Wright**



# Domestic emergencies require united response

## Earthquake exercise tests coordination of Guard, active duty troops, first responders

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**  
California Military Department Public Affairs

While most Americans are probably familiar with the fable of the ant and the grasshopper, how many apply the moral of the story to their own lives? How many have adopted the ant's philosophy of preparing in case of emergency?

That is a question of particular importance to the residents of California, a state with hundreds of thousands of acres of dry terrain ripe for wildfires, more than 200 fault lines and major population centers that could be targeted for a terrorist attack.

Ever-vigilant in the face of those threats, the California Guard in August coordinated United Response, a biennial exercise that brings together reserve and active duty troops from multiple components to train and prepare for a real-life emergency.

"United Response, when it was started in 2011, was the first dual-command exercise of its kind in the nation," said senior National Guard Bureau analyst Terry Finnegan in reference to the exercise's use of a dual-status commander — a National Guard officer who commands both National Guard and active duty troops responding to the same emergency.

The exercise scenario, a simulated earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area, played out Aug. 19-24 at multiple sites throughout California. Through the minutes, hours and days of the scenario, several essential operational principles became apparent.

One essential principle was the importance of interoperability among the responding agencies: Coordinating between organizations that have different command and reporting structures, standard operating procedures and even different radios can be easier said than done.

Though an onlooker observing uniformed service members conducting relief and rescue operations may assume they are all the same, there are actually two distinct groups with radically different roles and legal considerations. Active duty service members can support the National Guard and other state authorities in an emergency, but they are limited in their role out of respect for the state government's authority.

"[The Marine Corps] can move a large force up the coastline to respond to a disaster, but we cannot conduct security or law enforcement," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Mathew Becker of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

Another theme present throughout the exercise was institutional memory: As older service members retire and new service members come in, basic skills can degrade or be forgotten. Just as a rifleman builds muscle memory by repeatedly firing their weapon and performing exercises with their team, an organization builds institutional memory by conducting consistent and repetitive training year after year, so every member has participated.

"You have a lot of people, old and young," Finnegan said. "Let's apply the new generation's energy with the outgoing generation's knowledge."

United Response was mainly a tabletop exercise conducted at the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Sacramento. The exercise tested the joint chain of command's ability to coordinate responses to simulated events announced unexpectedly throughout the event, which challenged participants' ability to work under pressure.

The units, personnel and equipment deployed in the exercise were represented on the Emergency and Disaster Management Simulation system, a computer platform



Photo by Capt. (CA) Ronald Alexander

**Col. Robert Spano of the California National Guard takes questions during a simulated press conference Aug. 20 in Sacramento during earthquake exercise United Response. In the scenario, Spano was the emergency-response mission's dual-status commander, putting him in charge of all reserve and active duty military forces that were part of the relief effort.**

used to simulate a disaster or terrorist attack as well as the operations, movements and logistical needs of responding units.

"It's better to practice first without calling everyone up," said Spc. Caleb Hammonds, an Emergency and Disaster Management Simulation system operator. "The lessons we learn here can be applied in real life next year by units in their annual training."

In addition to the tabletop exercise, about 500 Soldiers and Airmen of the CNG Homeland Response Force (HRF) worked at Camp Roberts in Central California to respond to simulated fires in Richmond, Calif., and a simulated radiation leak at the Lawrence Livermore Labs in Livermore, Calif. The HRF is responsible for responding to any disaster in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IX, which includes Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada and several Pacific islands.

HRF members conducted search-and-extraction, decontamination and medical triage operations while wearing hazardous material suits. Additional HRF members provided security and crowd control, while its command-and-control element directed operations from a tactical operations center

in a field on Camp Roberts.

"Exercise United Response gave the FEMA Region IX HRF an excellent opportunity to run through its tactics, techniques and procedures in response to the realistic scenario of a large earthquake," HRF public affairs officer 1st Lt. Jason Sweeney said.

National Guard troops also worked at an oil refinery in the Bay Area with personnel from FEMA, the Navy, the Coast Guard, the California Fish and Wildlife Department and other agencies to establish satellite communications for first responders whose traditional means of communication were not functional following the quake.

Perhaps the most important consideration facing the myriad agencies conducting United Response was the ability of the involved organizations to participate without tying up resources and reducing their readiness for an actual crisis that could occur during the training event. This paid off, as the training went forward as planned, even as California Guard planes, helicopters and crews battled real-life wildfires.

"Let's make this simple, let's do it smart, for the benefit of the state," Finnegan said.

## CNG enables communications in any disaster

By **STAFF SGT. CHRISTIAN JADOT**  
California Military Department Public Affairs

A major earthquake hits the state of California. A train carrying munitions is derailed near an oil refinery.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christian Jadot

**Communications specialists from the CNG Directorate of Information Management in Sacramento deploy via Coast Guard assets to set up a rapid response communications package Aug. 21 in Martinez, Calif., during the United Response earthquake exercise.**

Roads are blocked, and all air assets have been otherwise deployed. First responder communications are lost. How can backup communications be established?

This was the question asked of the California National Guard on Aug. 21 during the weeklong, multi-agency exercise United Response. The Guard's Directorate of Information Management in Sacramento responded by sending communications specialists to the oil refinery in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"What we specifically supported is the communication failure for the Coast Guard, where the National Guard has stepped in to provide them reach-back to Sacramento by tactical satellite radio with data and voice lines," said CNG Spc. Benny Thorpe of the CNG Directorate of Information Management. "In this exercise today we did emergency rapid deployment via the U.S. Coast Guard Defender series search-and-rescue boats from Rio Vista."

The National Guard supplied the various agencies' commands with emergency communications as well as data, voice and video capabilities through portable Incident

Commander's Command, Control and Communications Unit "fly away kits."

"We have several agencies at play here. We have Coast Guard, we have the State Department of Fish and Wildlife, FEMA, the Navy, the National Guard and several other agencies that are involved in this exercise," said Coast Guard Commander Lexial Littlejohn. "All the agencies are working cooperatively together to ensure the responders are safe, the public is safe and to mitigate the environmental impact."

Guard communications specialists rarely have a chance to deploy by waterways in such a scenario and valued the opportunity.

"We can deploy during any scenario, but what we tested today was if the National Guard could rapidly deploy over water using other assets besides road and air," Thorpe said. "Today is the first time we have ever deployed on the water. It worked out really well for us to come down here and dock at the refinery to provide the communication support for this package."



# 1-185th tests every unit at annual training

California State Military Reserve support frees up Army Guard members to participate in exercise

By **CAPT. (CA) RONALD ALEXANDER**  
California State Military Reserve

A well-planned and -supervised Army training exercise can be an exciting and fun learning experience for all the Soldiers involved, regardless of rank. But what about the hapless junior troop left behind “in the rear with the gear,” as the saying goes? What about the Soldiers required to handle the logistics and support operations to make the event possible?

It can be a disappointing but necessary job for any service member to be left with the heavy lifting associated with a training event and miss the chance to train and learn with the rest of the team. Fortunately for members of the California Army National Guard’s 1st Battalion, 185th Armor Regiment (Combined Arms), who conducted their annual training July 6-21 at Fort Irwin, Calif., they had the support of a dedicated group of volunteers from Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, California State Military Reserve (CSMR).

The CSMR troops were activated for the duration of the exercise to fill crucial support roles. The CSMR is an all-volunteer force dedicated to providing assistance to the California Guard.

“We fill missions regularly performed by Guardsmen so that those Soldiers are able to focus on individual and unit training,” said Staff Sgt. (CA) Michael MacIver, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the



Photo by Capt. (CA) Ron Alexander

**Members of 1st Battalion, 185th Armor Regiment (Combined Arms), train on a Bradley Fighting Vehicle during the unit’s two-week annual training period in July at Fort Irwin, Calif.**

CSMR contingent at the 1-185th Armor Battalion’s annual training. “We are entrusted with an important mission. Let’s work as a team to get it done.”

The exercise itself, which included training lanes involving live ammunition, tested the battalion’s ability to integrate every unit in a combined arms operation, ranging from infantry squads to the command post, which includes Soldiers

performing every support function the combat troops require to achieve their objectives.

“It’s a one-stop shop,” said Staff Sgt. Holly Butler, a motor transport operator with the 1-181st Brigade Support Battalion, a component of the 1-185th. “They can get a hold of a fuel person, an ammunition person, a transportation person ... all in one central location.”

Amidst the diversity of actions, the exercise focused on one element in particular, for which the battalion is most well-known: the Bradley Fighting Vehicle. The Bradley and its variants serve a multitude of roles for the unit, carrying infantry teams into battle within the safety of its protective plating, serving as a highly mobile scouting vehicle and even identifying targets for artillery fire with pinpoint accuracy.

The Bradley plays a key role in the battalion’s combat effectiveness but requires effective teamwork and training between the Bradley crews and the infantry squads riding in the vehicles, referred to as “dis-mounts.” There is no military operational specialty for a Bradley crew member, which can be challenging at times, but it also brings an advantage: Both the dismount teams and the crew members are infantrymen who truly understand each other and the roles they serve in a mission.

“Just like anything else, the more you rehearse, the better you get, and nothing is more important than that when live rounds come into play,” said Pfc. Jordan Plaza, of Company A, 1-185th.

By the end of the exercise, every service member — Guardsman or CSMR, infantry or otherwise — served an important role in making the annual training event an outstanding success.

“This was an exciting exercise to be a part of,” Butler said.

## CSMR, 224th exemplify interagency partnership

By **CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 RICK DE LA TORRE**  
California State Military Reserve

The California State Military Reserve (CSMR) and the California Army National Guard’s 224th Sustainment Brigade are both strong organizations in their own right, but only as partners can they reach their full potential for service to the state and local community. Such cooperation only happens through the hard work and dedication of men and women who have a vision for increased teamwork between the CSMR and the brigade.

Maj. (CA) Christopher Fowler, the acting chaplain for the California State Military Reserve, has such a vision. He believes the growing relationship between the CSMR and the 224th Sustainment Brigade will continue to thrive and will serve as a statewide model going forth.

Fowler, who has served as assistant chaplain for the 224th, has played a key role in shaping the partnership, which includes a CSMR platoon virtually embedded with the 224th and a CSMR recruiting task force housed at the brigade’s headquarters in Long Beach.

“The real story here is the mutual respect that our National Guard and CSMR colleagues have for each other and how that respect translates into mission accomplishment,” Fowler said. “And the real ministry

for me is being able to care for such professional and dedicated Soldiers and leaders.”

Former 224th Commander Col. Peter Kim said the feelings of respect are mutual.

“I’d like to think that we’ve got one of the better relationships out of any of the other organizations throughout the state,” he said of the brigade’s CSMR partnership.

A CSMR platoon and color guard were on hand Aug. 3 to see Kim hand over the brigade’s leadership to Lt. Col. David Ceniti.

“The fact that they want to [stand with us] is even more of an honor to me — to let me know that they consider themselves and appreciate the fact that they are part of our organization, part of our team and part of our family,” Kim said. “That [CSMR Soldiers] do this on a completely voluntary basis just astounds me and it continues to awe me — the dedication and commitment. And it’s an honor to serve with [them].”

Spc. (CA) George Flannagan said it has been a special experience for his CSMR platoon to work closely with the brigade known as the “Dragonslayers.”

“We get to learn what they know, and they get to learn what we know,” he said. “It’s been a good interchange of information. [The partnership] allows us to experience what the Soldiers go through and [learn]



Photo by Staff Sgt. (CA) Richard Berquist

**A California State Military Reserve color guard participates in an Aug. 3 change-of-command ceremony for the 224th Sustainment Brigade at the unit’s Long Beach readiness center.**

how we can help them to be better Soldiers. And that’s our No. 1 job.”

The next step in the partnership will be to formally connect brigade personnel with CSMR Regional Support Command-South’s medical detachment, which comprises behavioral health specialists such as psychiatrists, Kim said.

Kim, who will now become chief of staff for the Guard’s 40th Infantry Division in Los

Alamitos, Calif., held a ceremony in his office on his last day in command to award Fowler an Army Commendation Medal.

“I am truly blessed and honored to be recognized in this way,” Fowler said about the federal award, which is rarely presented to CSMR personnel.

Fowler also is moving to the 40th ID, where he will serve as assistant chaplain for the division.



# HRF proves concept of self-sustainability

Homeland Response Force tests ability to fuel convoys independently in emergency situation

By **SGT. KENNETH BINCE**  
49th Military Police Brigade

On a scorching, dusty two-lane highway, a long military convoy snaked its way west Aug. 23. With diesel engines roaring, the armor-plated column advanced toward a long-needed reprieve; the band of Soldiers would soon share a highway rest area with families on road trips and truckers hauling goods on Route 46 in San Luis Obispo County.

In cooperation with the California Department of Transportation, two convoys of California National Guard troops completed a refueling-on-the-move exercise at the Shandon Rest Area that day.

Capt. Keith Wolowodiuk, the 1498th Transportation Company commander and a CNG Homeland Response Force logistical planner, said the convoys were proving the concept of self-sustainability.

"In the event of a natural disaster or weapon of mass destruction crisis, first responders or Tier 1 assets would require fuel to move," said Master Sgt. Gerald Davis of the 185th Military Police Company. "We could utilize local gas stations, but during a devastating incident, refueling infrastructures might be disrupted or delayed, and



Photo by Sgt. Kenneth Bince

**CNG Homeland Response Force members work with California Department of Transportation personnel at the Shandon Rest Area off Route 46 in San Luis Obispo County during an Aug. 23 refueling-on-the-move exercise.**

the last thing we would want to do is become a further burden to an affected area."

A 3,000-gallon tanker from Company G, 40th Brigade Support Battalion, established and operated a refueling point. Capt. Ian

Hiscock, commander of the Walnut Creek-based unit, said his Soldiers train in field support operations every other month.

Additional military policemen from the 649th Military Police Company based at

Camp San Luis Obispo supported traffic control to help speed up the process and mitigate vehicular congestion in the rest area.

"This opportunity to support the refueling mission was a win-win for me and my Soldiers," said Capt. Jason Carlisle, 649th MP Company commander. "They received [essential] training while helping direct vehicles."

With a focus on maximizing public safety and minimizing public impact, California Department of Transportation personnel were on hand to designate a safe area for the convoy to refuel and re-stage.

Successful completion of the refueling-on-the-move mission is the first phase in establishing a larger interagency civil support relationship and will ultimately lead to increased self-sustainability for the Homeland Response Force and the California National Guard, Davis said.

"It also opens the door for future cooperative training and real world planning between units of the National Guard and California Department of Transportation, where the end goal is to nest our planning with California Department of Transportation districts," he said.

## Sergeant amazed he gets paid to help people

Growing up in Mexico, Jesus Hernandez dreamed of becoming a Soldier, envisioned 'an entire nation looking up to you'

By **SGT. JESSI MCCORMICK**  
102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Jesus Hernandez was living in Mexico City with his family when he was denied admission to the Heroic Military Academy there. Disappointed, he returned to his home country and found other options with the California Army National Guard. Hernandez now finds himself helping close out the Operation Enduring Freedom mission in Afghanistan.

Born in Orange County, Calif., in 1987, Hernandez lived in California until age 12, when his family moved to Mexico City.

"There was only a certain amount of things you can do to progress in Mexico, so after the Military Academy said I couldn't go to college in Mexico because I wasn't born there, I returned to the U.S.," said Hernandez, now a sergeant in the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).

He decided to join the military shortly after returning to California.

"Being an American kid growing up in Mexico City, the idea of being a Soldier was important because I had this vision of an entire nation looking up to you," Hernandez said. "The National Guard appealed to me because I liked the variety of working overseas and in the States, on a federal and state level. Both are good because you get to help people."

Hernandez attended basic training at Fort Benning, Ga., and graduated in April 2007.

He was interested in a paralegal or clerical position until he spoke with his recruiter.

"When my recruiter described the infantry, it sounded like something that would put me out in the people," Hernandez said. "I like to talk and interact with people. I like to learn and ask a lot of questions."

Hernandez was attached to an engineer company for a deployment to Kosovo at the end of 2008 and found the deployment very fulfilling.

"I couldn't believe I was getting paid to do that mission," He said. "We made a difference. We got doctors and the medical corps where they needed to go so that they could help the local population."

After Kosovo, Hernandez worked full-time with the National Guard patrolling the Mexico border and conducting counter-drug operations. He then began working as an administration specialist.

Hernandez deployed with the 79th IBCT to Multinational Base-Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, in July of this year as an assistant administration noncommissioned officer. Some of his daily duties include keeping up with personnel movements, updating files and retrieving mail for all personnel in Combined Team Uruzgan.

"As an infantryman, I had administration issues in the past," Hernandez said. "Those past problems have helped me to not be lazy and keep paperwork updated. I get to help manage the Soldiers' paperwork that



Photo by Sgt. Jessi McCormick

**Sgt. Jesus Hernandez of the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team receives a challenge coin Aug. 3 from Col. Simon Stuart of the Australian Army, former commander of Combined Team Uruzgan, in recognition of Hernandez's exceptional service at Multinational Base-Tarin Kot, Afghanistan.**

determines their career, and that makes my job important and worthwhile."

Hernandez received a commendation for his hard work less than a month after arriving in theater. He was presented with the commander's coin, which is awarded for excellence in support of Combined Team Uruzgan.

"Sergeant Hernandez has consistently put the mission first, no matter how difficult the tasks may be," said Capt. Cameron Larsuel, commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 79th IBCT. "He is an inspiring young Soldier who constantly improves his tactical and technical proficiency and motivates other young Soldiers who seek purpose and direction."



# Terror scenario validates HRF skills

CNG Homeland Response Force (HRF) recertified to cover FEMA Region IX

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY  
California Military Department Public Affairs

Camp Roberts in Central California took on the appearance of a disaster zone for two weeks in August during an external evaluation exercise for the California National Guard Homeland Response Force (HRF). The HRF passed the intense, fast-moving test with flying colors, ensuring it will remain responsible for responding to catastrophic incidents throughout Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region IX.

"We worked for nearly a week straight performing 24-hour operations," said Sgt. Daniel Greene, a battle noncommissioned officer (NCO) for the HRF. "Everyone was tired and challenged but worked through it successfully."

The exercise scenario consisted of a mass casualty terrorist attack on Las Vegas hotels involving multiple explosions and the release of toxic gas. Dozens of actors from a private company played the roles of victims. The actors were made up with realistic moulage that simulated everything from missing limbs to sucking chest wounds and ghastly head injuries.

The victims were rescued and treated by National Guardsmen from the HRF, who were outfitted in gas masks and hazmat suits. The service members quickly set up tent cities, where they decontaminated casualties and provided emergency medical attention.

Clipboard-toting observer/controllers from the West Virginia-based Joint Interagency Training and Education Center (JITEC) shadowed HRF personnel during the exercise as they responded to the unfolding disaster scenario. The JITEC observer/controllers assessed the actions of the Soldiers and Airmen as they conducted decontamination, search-and-extraction, medical treatment, security and command-and-control operations.

"The HRF is capable of rapidly providing lifesaving support to our communities in the event of a natural or man-made disaster," HRF Commander Col. Kelly Fisher said. "The exercise at Camp Roberts gave us an opportunity to showcase the capabilities of our highly trained Soldiers and Airmen and recertify the force so that it can continue its important homeland response mission."

FEMA Region IX encompasses California, Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada and several Pacific islands — a region that is home to



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. Chris Dudge



**TOP:** A member of the CNG Homeland Response Force (HRF) treats a role player with simulated injuries caused by a mock terrorist attack during a two-week emergency-response exercise at Camp Roberts, Calif., on Aug. 27. **ABOVE:** HRF members evacuate an injured role player Aug. 28.

more than 36 million people. The Region IX HRF is composed of several elements from the California Army National Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade and the medical element of the California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing.

The HRF's mission is to deploy within 12 hours to assist civil authorities following a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-yield explosive (CBRNE) event. The HRF is organized into three main elements: command and control, which directs the overall mission; the 9th CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package, or CERFP, which conducts search-and-extraction, decontamination and medical triage operations; and a casualty assistance and support element, which provides force protection.

The HRF took on its mission after first earning certification in March 2012. Because of leadership changes and new personnel, the HRF was required to pass a second evaluation this year. After intense preparation, training and a trial-run field exercise in May, the HRF hit the ground at Camp Roberts on Aug. 19 ready for action.

The HRF's command-and-control element, made up of the 49th Military Police Brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), quickly erected tents that served as the HRF's tactical operations

center. Meanwhile the CERFP set up decontamination and medical tents in a field next to the Camp Roberts search-and-extraction training site, which is also known as "the rubble pile."

In all, about 500 Soldiers and Airmen took part in the evaluation exercise. For a real world event, the HRF can command up to 1,200 service members.

The week prior to the exercise, the HRF warmed up by participating in United Response, a California National Guard command post exercise involving a catastrophic earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area. Following United Response, the HRF switched gears and responded to the evaluation exercise's Las Vegas terrorist attack scenario. Most of the action during the evaluation exercise took place at night, a first for the HRF and for JITEC.

Soldiers from the 235th Engineer Company used their specialized equipment and training to search for and extract casualties trapped in the rubble pile. Members of the 149th Chemical Company decontaminated the wounded, hosing them down and scrubbing them as they cycled through decontamination tents. The Airmen of the 144th Medical Group conducted triage and casualty management until the victims could be evacuated. And the Soldiers of

**"If something were to go down, such as a chemical or nuclear attack, I know the National Guard is there and ready to help."**

**— 1st Lt. Cyndi Pearl Auza**  
49th MP Brigade Headquarters  
and Headquarters Company

the 185th Military Police Battalion manned entry control points, maintained security, performed crowd and casualty control, and provided additional manpower for activities such as moving casualties.

"We were able to accurately rehearse what we would do in a real world scenario, from deployment to mission execution to recover and reset," HRF battle NCO Sgt. 1st Class Jessamyn Sobeckingle said. "We passed the [evaluation] and, more importantly, we were able to see what our shortfalls were so that we can correct them and become more effective as a HRF."

In an after action report following the completion of the exercise, JITEC Director Lt. Col. Scott Fuller praised the HRF for successfully passing the exercise. He said JITEC would recommend to Gov. Jerry Brown and California National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin that the HRF should be revalidated to continue its mission.

"All units under the HRF umbrella put in the maximum effort that they could, and it all came together," said 49th Military Police Brigade HHC Commander 1st Lt. Cyndi Pearl Auza. "If something were to go down, such as a chemical or nuclear attack, I know the National Guard is there and ready to help."



# Troops bond with pilgrims to Kosovo church

By **CAPT. RANDY READY**  
Kosovo Force

Kosovo Force (KFOR) Soldiers took part in a pilgrimage to the Church of the Black Madonna in Letnica, Kosovo, on Aug. 15 to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The ceremony commemorates the death of Jesus' mother and her assumption into heaven.

People have been making the pilgrimage to the church for more than 400 years, despite recurrent political and religious turmoil throughout the history of the Balkans region. Maj. Timothy Meier, the chaplain for Kosovo Multinational Battle Group-East and a member of the California National Guard, believes it is the church's openness that has helped it survive all these years.

"The parish has flourished in part, I think, because they have a centuries-old tradition of welcoming people of any faith to come pray there," Meier said.

That tradition continued this year as the church welcomed more than 200 KFOR Soldiers, who represented several countries and faiths, to take part in the day's activities. The KFOR Soldiers' pilgrimage started with a nearly 2-mile walk through the Kosovo countryside to the Church of the Black Madonna, where they attended an Albanian mass and toured the church and the town.

For Sgt. 1st Class Edmund Unutoa of the Florida Guard, the best part of the day was interacting with the thousands of civilians from throughout the Balkans who made the pilgrimage.

"Even though we didn't speak the same language,

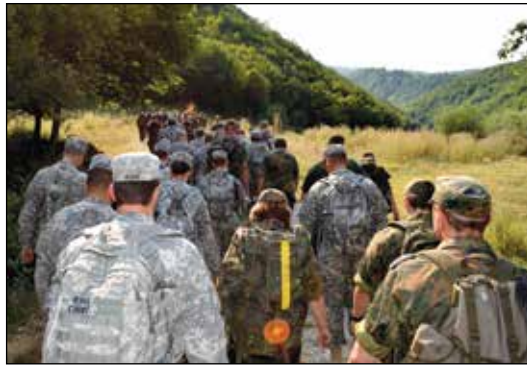


Photo by Capt. Randy Ready

**Soldiers of several nations make a pilgrimage to the Church of the Black Madonna in Kosovo on Aug. 15.**

just a smile and a handshake really meant a lot to me, and I'm pretty sure it meant a lot to them too," Unutoa said.

For others the visit had another special meaning.

"Eighty-five years ago, Mother Theresa, then 19 years old, came with her family from Skopje [in Macedonia] to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption," Meier said. "While she was here for that celebration, she experienced God's call to change her life completely and become a religious woman, a nun."

Meier, who was able to read from the Bible during a mass outside the church, enjoyed seeing the number of people on missions of charity who were at the ceremony.

"I found it especially wonderful that they were there today because that religious order got founded as a consequence, ultimately, of Mother Theresa becoming Mother Theresa subsequent to being here on the 15th of August in 1928," he said.

Meier said KFOR's participation this year provided a good example to the people of the Balkans about what can happen when people of different backgrounds, religions and nationalities agree to get along.

"I believe that countries being able to work together, to play together, to pray together will do much more for a guarantee of peace and prosperity in the world than pretty much anything else," Meier said.

# Taking in the trash

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**  
CA Military Dept. Public Affairs

hicle lurch uneasily with the battered tank in tow.

One man's trash is another man's treasure. For the staff of the Camp Roberts Historical Museum, junk and baubles other people might dismiss as worthless are prized possessions — parts of the rich and continuing story of Camp Roberts, Calif.

CNG Soldiers recently recovered a new item for the museum, an M4 Sherman tank. Though the museum already has many other vehicles, all beautifully restored, this tank stands out from the rest: Shredded by decades of artillery fire, it is barely recognizable as a tank at all. The tank was found on the base's impact area, where it had been used as a target.

"This is a unique exhibit; I can't think of anything else quite like it," said Don Avery, a staff member at the museum, as he watched an M88 recovery ve-

No attempt will be made to restore the rusted hulk; it will stand as a testament to the weapons training at Camp Roberts.

Avery has seen Camp Roberts grow from the very beginning in 1941, when his parents worked there as civilian contractors. Now that Camp Roberts is a National Guard training site, as it has been since 1971, Avery wants the museum to become more relevant to the Guard.

"The Soldiers training on Roberts back in the '40s were draftees," Avery said. "But the National Guard, you're all volunteers. The base is yours now; the museum should tell your story."

Other additions are scheduled to be completed this year that will further cover the Guard experience on the base.



Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

**Soldiers at Camp Roberts, Calif., use an M88 recovery vehicle on July 2 to extract an M4 Sherman tank from a range where it had been used for artillery target practice. It will now be displayed at the camp's museum.**

# Next generation of leaders completes OCS, WOCS

By **1ST LT. JAN BENDER**  
California Military Department Public Affairs

Every seat was full in Camp San Luis Obispo's Perlee Theatre on Aug. 10 when 53 newly minted second lieutenants and warrant officers were commissioned and appointed in front of a cheering mass of family, friends, fellow Soldiers and leaders from across the California Military Department.

The class of officers and warrant officers included 30 members of the California Army National Guard and 23 from the California State Military Reserve (CSMR). For many the ceremony was the culmination of years in uniform and marked a transition to a new level of service.

"I've always loved what I do helping Soldiers, and this is a transition into helping them in a different way," said 2nd Lt. Jowana McFadden, who served nearly 15 years as an enlisted legal specialist in the Guard. "After my first deployment, I realized that I wanted to do something else, to effect change in a different way. I saw some really strong leaders and I wanted to be a part of that."

The class had a combined total of more than 218 years of service as enlisted members. Five members of the class had previous service in the National Guard, while 14 had served in the active duty Army, five in the Marine Corps, two in the Navy, three in the active duty Air Force and one in the Coast Guard.



Photo by 1st Lt. Jan Bender

**Newly minted Army officer 2nd Lt. Bradford Kelly and his graduating classmates takes the oath of office during a commissioning ceremony Aug. 10 on Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif.**

"When I look back at my entire career and everything that I've done, in my mind, this is my last great accomplishment when it comes to schooling," said 2nd Lt. David Jewell, who sought out a commission in the Army Guard following a break in service after 14 years on active duty with the Air Force. "When I got out after my time on active duty, I realized I had made a big mistake and I found my way back in. I've been working towards this my entire life. I can't believe I'm here today."

The class is diverse in terms of the members' civilian professions, including law enforcement officers, business owners, engineers, professors, teachers, students, accountants, CEOs, a biologist and even a water polo coach. With their skilled backgrounds, the men and women of the graduating class embody the citizen-Soldier strength of the Guard.

"School- and career-wise, things have always come easy to me, but this has been very humbling," said Cal Guard 2nd Lt. Jonathan Preston, who stepped away from his civilian job as a high school teacher and principal to join the National Guard and attend basic training alongside one of his graduating students in 2011. After two years of training, earning his commission as an officer was a moment he will cherish. "I have so much respect for the people that have done this all their lives; they're almost on a pedestal in my mind. All the [noncommissioned officers] and trainers we've had along the way, I've learned so much from them. It's been a great experience."

For most of those who walked across the stage, their sights were set on the things that lie ahead.

"I've already been approached about becoming a commander of a CSMR detachment," said CSMR 2nd Lt. Michael Thompson. "That makes me feel proud. All the hard work was worth it. I look forward to more responsibility and putting my leadership training to work to improve the processes around me, to benefit the Guard as a whole."



# 579th engineers pave the way on Camp Roberts

By 1ST LT. JASON SWEENEY  
CA Military Dept. Public Affairs

A coyote trotted onto Crusher Haul Road and stopped to take a long look at the procession of heavy equipment rolling up the hill. A dump truck, grader, water spreader and two compactors, accompanied by military engineers on foot, rumbled up the hill putting the final touches on the newly improved road, which a week earlier had been a potholed dirt track that made for a bumpy ride.

Crusher Haul Road runs for about a mile up a hill from a rock quarry before descending to the main barracks area of Camp Roberts. It is used mainly by trucks that haul crushed aggregate from the quarry to a Camp Roberts Department of Public Works facility and to the many construction projects at the camp.

Trucks, tanks and weather had taken their toll on the road.

"It had craters you could hide a Humvee in," said 1st Lt. Brandon Kennard, project officer for the 649th Horizontal Construction Company, which is part of the 579th Engineer Battalion.

Driving the road now, however, is smooth going thanks to the engineers of the 579th, who spent two weeks in August working on three infrastructure projects at the camp during the battalion's annual training.

"Vehicles can pass through here now without any hindrances," Kennard said. "It's a straight shot."

The work was performed by Task Force Wildcat, which comprised four units from the 579th. In addition to Crusher Haul Road, the task force paved a running track that will eventually run through a green belt and repaved a parking lot that serves the post's Reconfigurable Vehicle Tactical Trainer.

The units that made up Task



Photos by Sgt. Kenneth Bince

Force Wildcat were the 649th Engineer Company from Chico, the 129th Engineer Detachment from Lakeport, the 645th Engineer Detachment from Sacramento and the 1401st Engineer Detachment from Camp Roberts.

"All four units work in unison," Task Force Wildcat Commander Capt. Thomas Murphy said. "When we came down here for annual training, the projects were shovel-ready for us."

In all, 172 Soldiers were in the task force. They put their equipment, skills and backs to work under a blazing August sun and in dust that was often whipped up by winds gusting over the camp's parched hills.

"I enjoy working outside in the construction field," said Spc. Jeffrey Coats of the 649th. "The work we're doing here is going to help with dust and erosion control."

Planning the annual training was a yearlong process, Murphy said. The battalion staff worked with the Camp Roberts Department of Public Works to match the battalion's capabilities with work needed on the post, he explained.

"We provided these guys with projects that can increase their [military occupational specialty] skills, and they filled an operational need on Camp Roberts," said Capt. Ryan Adams, supervisor of engineer plans and services for the Public Works Department.

The projects allowed the Soldiers to run through their mission-essential task list, which is the set of tasks they need to master to be proficient at their jobs, he said. For the projects, each of the units in the task force had distinct roles defined by their unit capabilities.

The Soldiers of the 1401st, who specialize in quarry operations, operated a large rock crusher in the Camp Roberts quarry.

"We make little rocks out of big rocks," said Sgt. 1st Class Russell Wright, first sergeant for the 1401st.

Chunks of recycled concrete from demolished buildings were loaded into the crusher, which turned them into the aggregate that was used to form the road base for Crusher Haul Road. The 1401st produced 2,800 cubic yards of aggregate from recycled concrete over three days, Wright said.

The Soldiers of the 649th, who specialize in road construction, hauled the aggregate to the work sites where it was spread, graded and compacted.

Soldiers from the 645th, who are



asphalt specialists, and from the 129th, who are concrete finishing specialists, laid the final paved surface on the parking lot and running track, called the Miracle Mile, which will provide a much needed area for Soldiers to conduct physical training on the post, Adams said.

During the two-week training period, the 645th paved a 1,750-foot segment of the Miracle Mile and laid down 850 tons of asphalt in total. It was the first time the detachment got the chance to lay down asphalt as a unit.

The task force's Soldiers also got the opportunity to train with their heavy equipment on the Camp Roberts engineer training lanes. The lanes allowed them to get stick time in their bulldozers, loaders, graders, backhoes and compactors and earn the certifica-

tions that allow them to operate the vehicles.

When they first arrived at the camp, the training lanes had been covered with about two feet of dust that the Soldiers called moon dust because of its fineness. The task force restored the lanes by digging down to a hard base, adding water and then compacting the soil so that the lanes can be used for training again next year.

Staff Sgt. Jared Smith, a squad leader with the 649th, said the task force Soldiers were making the most of their annual training by gaining valuable experience that can be used both in their military and civilian careers.

"Here's our chance to come out here and operate our equipment," Smith said. "It's an awesome opportunity."



**TOP:** Sgt. Timothy Biggerstaff and other members of the 645th Engineer Detachment, 579th Engineer Battalion, pave a road Aug. 21 on Camp Roberts, Calif., during the battalion's annual training. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Spc. Cody James of the 1401st Engineer Detachment sprays water on a load of dirt and broken concrete to mitigate dust contamination Aug. 19. **The 1401st specializes in quarry operations, "mak[ing] little rocks out of big rocks."** **ABOVE:** A 649th Engineer Company member operates a bulldozer Aug. 20.



# RTAs gain ‘life-changing’ resilience training

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

Any Army leader faces the daily challenge of communicating with his or her Soldiers, and must show equal or even greater skill and empathy when interacting with loved ones outside of the military. A five-year-old doesn't fully understand what a combat deployment is. A young wife might not understand why her husband has to spend the weekend in the field. A mother might not understand why her son has to deploy a third time.

With these challenges in mind, the California Army National Guard's newest generation of resilience trainer assistants (RTA) graduated their three-day course at the Okinawa Street Readiness Center in Sacramento on Sept. 5. This was the first in-depth introduction for the students into the Army's resilience program, which teaches Soldiers to cope with stress and interpersonal relationships in every aspect of their lives, on and off work. RTAs are qualified to assist master resilience trainers (MRT) in training their respective units and may go on to become MRTs themselves.

Immediately upon entering the course, all of the students, regardless of age, sex or rank, were taken out of their comfort zone. Partners were assigned at random for each exercise, forcing the Soldiers to socialize and work with strangers they may have never met before, and every problem had to be solved through effective communication.

Many of the Soldiers who entered the RTA course skepti-



Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer

**Guard Soldiers from around the state work on an assignment during the Resilience Trainer Assistant (RTA) course Sept. 5 in Sacramento. RTAs work with master resilience trainers to improve morale, teamwork and communication within units.**

cal of its benefits left as strong supporters of the program.

"I feel like the resilience program challenges me to increase my level of enthusiasm," said Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Huerta, an MRT from the Army Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion who taught the September course. "MRT isn't specific to deployments or combat arms, it's relevant to everyone."

Every new member of the Army is immediately introduced to resilience concepts, starting with the Recruit Sustainment Program and progressing all the way to MRT. While sometimes confused with suicide prevention, resilience is a related, but distinct idea. A resilient Soldier is taught not to be emotionless, or completely composed at all times, but

to learn from their previous mistakes and hard times, and to continue their life with an optimistic attitude.

"This was really a big help for me to look at and evaluate myself as a Soldier," said 1st Lt. Emily Giusti from the California Army National Guard Medical Detachment.

The RTA and MRT courses are open to enlisted leaders, warrant officers and commissioned officers alike. RTA students are taught interpersonal relationship skills, which are useful not just for dealings with other Soldiers, but families and friends as well.

"This changed my views on a lot of situations," Huerta said. "This changed my life; I'm never going back."

## 24-year Soldier learns new resilience tricks

By **SGT. IAN M. KUMMER**  
69th Public Affairs Detachment

Remember the old saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks? Though a commonly believed adage, it does not hold true in the 21st century Army. An effective warfighting organization must be able to adapt to a rapidly changing world, and for an organization to adapt, so must its Soldiers.

For the Soldiers to adapt, their noncommissioned officers must adapt first.

For one sergeant first class in the 746th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, that change hasn't come easily. In Won Bennett's more than 24 years of service, the Army has changed dramatically, from a conventional top-down organization in the Cold War to the highly adaptive fighting force it is today.

One of the greatest challenges this experienced Soldier has faced in his career is keeping pace with the Army's changing attitudes and policies, and in turn educating the troops under his charge. But Bennett has not only adapted, he has led the charge in changing attitudes and prejudices that are detrimental to combat-effectiveness and mission-readiness.

The San Antonio native first attended the Resilience Trainer Assistant (RTA) course in August 2012. Though initially a skeptic, Bennett came to realize the effectiveness of the resilience program in his life, both at work with his troops and with his family. The program taught Bennett not just effective stress-coping techniques, but also valuable communications skills he uses to influence the lives and well-being of everyone around him.

"I will be utilizing these skills for the rest of my life," he said. "It is a great feeling to see my family coming together more."

Like any class or training session, not every Soldier benefits from resilience training. To truly learn, the Soldier must put forth the effort and interest to learn.

"You get out of it what you put into it," Bennett said.

Bennett was encouraged by his RTA instructors to take his training to the next

level. The following October, he attended the Master Resilience Trainer course (MRT), qualifying him to lead a resilience program at his own unit and to train new RTAs from around the state.

"Both myself and my Soldiers can benefit from this course down to the lowest level," Bennett said.

Bennett, a Tulare, Calif., resident, has only one regret about his participation in Army resilience training — that the program was not introduced sooner.

"I think I as a junior Soldier would have excelled more than I did [if] I would have had these tools," Bennett said.

Soldiers who have worked side-by-side with Bennett have seen his development since he was introduced to the program.

"We've worked together before; he is a great guy," said Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas Huerta from the Army Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion. "He loves MRT and applies it wherever he can."

Resilience is a skill valuable to every Soldier, regardless of rank, sex or age, and Bennett advocates for it at every opportunity.

"This is the best course the military has ever presented," he said.



**Sgt. 1st Class Won Bennett discusses a Soldier's real-life problem with a student working group during the Resilience Trainer Assistant course Sept. 5 in Sacramento. Students were encouraged to share real-life events and solutions as a learning opportunity.**

Photo by Sgt. Ian M. Kummer





A CH-47 Chinook helicopter crew from the CNG's Stockton-based 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment, transports California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection hand crew members to an area near Los Molinos in Northern California to fight the Deer Fire on Aug. 27. Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

## Same-sex spouses receive full benefits

Same-sex spouses of California National Guard members are eligible to receive the full range of benefits offered to married military couples in accordance with Department of Defense guidance dated Aug. 13. The availability of benefits is retroactive to June 26.

Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the California National Guard, said he welcomes the changes and will ensure the California Military Department implements them fairly and in a timely fashion. He requested patience, however, while procedural changes are implemented.

"The values on which this country was founded are universal values which transcend culture, history, race and nationality. We have learned as an organization that mission success hinges upon the diversity of our force throughout our ranks," he wrote in an Aug. 26 memo to Military Department personnel. "The California National Guard will continue to recruit, retain and develop Soldiers and Airmen representative of the full spectrum of the American people whom we serve. We will promote a culture that embraces diversity and provides the opportunity for all of our employees and their families to reach their full potential."

## Free financial counseling

Guard members are eligible to receive free personal financial counseling through the Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC) program. Available services include confidential consultations for individuals and families, referrals to military and community resources, support for family members during deployments, help with credit management and budgeting, and assistance with benefits. MFLC also provides free training and workshops on topics such as debt management, financial planning for life goals and economic security, taxes, estate and retirement planning, raising financially savvy kids and understanding mortgages.

In Northern California, Guard members' personal financial counselor is Kristy Tubbs at 916-224-2925 or [CA-JFSAP1@MFLC.Zeiders.com](mailto:CA-JFSAP1@MFLC.Zeiders.com). In Central California, contact Darryl Jones at 480-273-0020 or [CA-JFSAP2@MFLC.Zeiders.com](mailto:CA-JFSAP2@MFLC.Zeiders.com), and in Southern California, contact Hong Tran at 512-773-9937 [CA-JFSAP3@MFLC.Zeiders.com](mailto:CA-JFSAP3@MFLC.Zeiders.com).

## ESGR week in September

President Barack Obama issued a proclamation in September that designated the week of Sept. 22-28 as National Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week.

"We are grateful to the employers that provide our Reservists and National Guard members extraordinary support and flexibility," Obama said. "We commend the businesses that help service members advance their civilian careers and ease transitions between military and civilian life."

## Cobbs commands 115th RSG

Lt. Col. Juanita E. Cobbs assumed command of the 115th Regional Support Group, effective Aug. 15. She has previous Support Group experience in operations, logistics and personnel resources and has served as the group's full-time administrative officer.

## Suicide Prevention Month

September is recognized nationally as Suicide Prevention Month, a time to reflect on the unseen injuries many service members and their families deal with on a daily basis. Leaders in all units are integrating suicide prevention and resilience training into their units' schedules this month. The Armed Forces have made great strides in caring for service members, yet the number of suicides in the military continues to grow. Service members who experience suicidal thoughts should utilize the free resources available to them. For a full list of contact information for behavioral health personnel serving California National Guard members, visit [www.calguard.ca.gov/BH](http://www.calguard.ca.gov/BH) or call 916-854-3894. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline is also available 24 hours a day at 800-273-8255.

## DID YOU KNOW...

### the term 'unauthorized absence' is different from 'absent without leave'

The term absent without leave, or AWOL, should not be used to refer to a Guard member who fails to show up for a unit training assembly or multiple unit training assembly. The proper term is unauthorized absence.

If a Soldier or Airman accumulates nine unauthorized absences in a 12-month period, the service member is considered an "unsatisfactory participant" and is subject to disciplinary action, including nonjudicial punishment (also known as Article 15), reduction in rank, denial of re-enlistment, court martial and discharge from the National Guard.

Army commanders must "flag" any unsatisfactory participant's file when involuntary separation or discharge is pending. The flag will prevent any favorable personnel actions, including promotions, awards, tuition assistance and bonus payments. Air Guard commanders can immediately demote an Airman upon reaching six unauthorized absences in a 12-month period.

A Guard member is considered AWOL if he or she fails to attend or complete an entire period of duty while assigned to active duty or annual training status. Discipline for being AWOL is prescribed by Article 86 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and can include nonjudicial punishment, court martial, a bench warrant and discharge from the National Guard.

Further guidance can be requested from the Staff Judge Advocate or found in Army Regulation 135-91 or Air National Guard Instruction 36-2001.





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Soldiers from the Cal Guard's 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team raise the flag at Multinational Base-Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, on Aug. 5.  
Photo by Sgt. Jessi Ann McCormick

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